

Correspondence between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the
Opposition concerning the formation of a Parliamentary
National Service Commission.

[88]

OTTAWA, Ont., October 14, 1916.

MY DEAR SIR WILFRED LAURIER,—I beg to enclose herewith copy of a letter which I have received from Sir Thomas Tait as Director General of National Service. With the letter he transmits a recommendation unanimously made by the Directors of National Service in conference at Ottawa as to the formation of a Parliamentary National Service Commission and the issue of calls to the manhood of Canada as set forth in his letter and in the resolution.

You may remember that during the last session of Parliament I suggested to you the formation of a parliamentary committee along somewhat similar lines.

I am quite prepared to accept the proposal of the conference and to undertake the formation of such a committee; and I trust that you will be good enough to co-operate. Of course, Parliament itself is the final authority for the appointment of a parliamentary committee in the ordinary sense; but it seems to me that a committee composed of members of Parliament for the purpose set forth in the resolution might be formed in the meantime. I would suggest a committee of twelve, and I would ask you to name five members of whom I hope you will be one. If you should think a larger number desirable I shall willingly acquiesce.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

R. L. BORDEN.

The Right Honourable Sir WILFIRD LAURIER, P.C., etc.,
Ottawa.

OFFICE OF
THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL SERVICE

OTTAWA, October 12, 1916.

SIR,—I have the honour to transmit herewith a recommendation unanimously made by the Directors of National Service in conference at Ottawa, as to the formation of a Parliamentary National Service Committee and the issue by proclamation and otherwise, of strong and explicit calls to the manhood of Canada, of military age and fitness, to enlist for overseas service, to the men and women of Canada to serve the nation in such capacities as their services may be of most value, and to all employers to effect such industrial organization as is necessary to meet emergencies arising out of the war.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,

THOS. TAIT,

Director General.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN, G.C.M.G.,
Prime Minister of Canada,
Ottawa.

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The Directors of National Service in conference at Ottawa, having regard to the duties imposed on them and to the work which lies before them, are strongly of the opinion that the following recommendations, if given effect to by the Government, would materially assist in that work:—

That a Parliamentary National Service Committee to be composed of representatives of all the political parties in Parliament be formed at the earliest possible date.

That such committee as soon as possible after its formation issue, by proclamation and through the public press and in any other expedient way,

(a) A strong and explicit call to the manhood of Canada of military age and fitness to enlist for Overseas Military and Naval Service;

(b) A similar call to the men and women of Canada individually and through their various organizations to serve the nation in such capacities as their services may be of most value;

(c) A similar call to all employers to effect such industrial reorganization as is necessary to meet emergencies arising out of the war.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

OTTAWA, October 17, 1916.

MY DEAR BORDEN,—On receipt yesterday of your favour of the 14th instant, I caused a search to be made in the official *Gazette* for the Order in Council organizing the National Service Commission as, naturally, I would want to know exactly the service entrusted to the commission, before answering the suggestion contained in your letter.

I cannot find that the Order in Council was published in *The Gazette*, and if published in the daily press I have missed it.

May I, therefore, ask you for a copy of the Order in Council, and upon receipt of it I will hasten to answer your communication.

Believe me ever,

Yours very sincerely,

WILFRID LAURIER.

Right Honourable Sir ROBERT L. BORDEN, G.C.M.G.,
Ottawa.

OTTAWA, October 17, 1916.

MY DEAR SIR WILFRID LAURIER,—The Order in Council as amended upon the suggestion of Sir Thomas Tait was approved on the 5th inst., and in reply to your letter of to-day I have much pleasure in sending you a copy.

Yours faithfully,

R. L. BORDEN.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER, M.P.,
Ottawa.

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NATIONAL SERVICE REGULATIONS AS ESTABLISHED BY ORDER IN COUNCIL OF OCTOBER 5, 1916.

P.C. 2351.

AT THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE AT OTTAWA,

THURSDAY, the 5th day of October, 1916.

PRESENT:

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IN COUNCIL.

His Royal Highness the Governor General in Council, under the provisions of the War Measures Act, 1914, is pleased to make the following regulations respecting National Service, and the same are hereby made and enacted accordingly.

RODOLPHE BOUDREAU,

Clerk of the Privy Council.

REGULATIONS RESPECTING NATIONAL SERVICE.

1. The Governor in Council may appoint a Director General of National Service (hereinafter called the Director General) who, under the Prime Minister, shall be charged with the duty of directing, supervising and co-ordinating the work of the Directors of National Service.

2. The Governor in Council may appoint for each military district one or more Directors of National Service (hereinafter called directors) who under the Director General shall be charged with the duties herinafter mentioned.

3. The powers and duties of a director shall be as follows:—

(a) To make himself acquainted with the nature and importance of the various industries (agriculture, manufacturing, mining, lumbering, fishing, and others) which are being carried on in any locality within his district.

(b) For the purpose of obtaining necessary information respecting conditions of industry and of employment from time to time, the Directors or the Board, as the case may be, shall confer with and receive communications from persons engaged in the industries hereinbefore mentioned and from any organizations especially interested, such as agricultural societies, labour organizations, and manufacturers' associations.

(c) For the purpose of maintaining and carrying on all important industries and of affording to the greatest possible number of men the opportunity of military service, to take such measures as may be expedient to have all available labour in the Dominion utilized to the greatest advantage, and with that view to make an estimate of such available labour.

(d) For the like purpose to arrange as far as possible for the employment of women in work within their capacity where additional labour is necessary.

(e) For the purpose of securing the largest available military forces in the present war, to co-operate with and to afford all possible information to the military authorities engaged in recruiting within his district.

(f) To take into consideration the character and importance of the employment in which any persons proposed to be recruited may be engaged; and to notify the Commanding Officer of any unit which is being recruited in any such locality whether the services of such persons would be of more value to the State in the employment in which they are then engaged than if such persons were enlisted for active service in the military forces of Canada.

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(g) In case the Director determines that the services of any person are of more value to the State in the employment in which he is then engaged, such person shall not be enlisted in the military forces of Canada without the written authority of the Director General.

(h) The Officer Commanding any unit which is being recruited in any such locality may appeal, through the regular channel from the decision of the Director to the Director General, whose decision shall be final.

(i) The Governor in Council may at the instance of the Director General appoint a National Service Board or Boards in any Military District. Each Board shall be composed of three persons of whom the Director may be one; and the Director, if a member, shall be chairman *ex officio*. The Order in Council appointing such Board may invest the Board with all or any of the powers and duties which otherwise would be vested in the Director or with any additional powers.

4. The salaries and allowances of the Director General and the Directors of National Service shall be such as the Governor in Council shall from time to time appoint.

5. Salaries and all other expenses incurred in carrying out the provisions of these regulations shall be paid out of the moneys available for the defence and security of Canada under the War Appropriation Acts.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

OTTAWA, October 19, 1917.

DEAR SIR ROBERT BORDEN,—On receiving Monday last, the 16th inst., your letter of the previous Saturday transmitting to me the resolution of the Directors of National Service for the formation of a Parliamentary National Service Committee to assist in the work entrusted to them, you ask me to co-operate with you in the formation of such a committee, and you add that during last session you made me a suggestion on similar lines.

As to the latter observation, I must say at once that your suggestion must have been a very casual one, in the course of conversation on other matters for I have no recollection whatever of it.

As to your present proposal, it seemed to me indispensable that I should acquaint myself of the exact powers and duties assigned to the Directors of National Service, as defined in the Order in Council creating the Service, and I at once caused a search to be made for it in the file of *The Canada Gazette*. The search satisfied me that it had not been published, and on Tuesday I asked you for a copy, which I received the same day, and I think I ought to reproduce it here in its entirety:—

1. The Governor in Council may appoint a Director General of National Service (hereinafter called the Director General) who, under the Prime Minister shall be charged with the duty of directing, supervising and co-ordinating the work of the Directors of National Service hereinafter mentioned.

2. The Governor in Council may appoint for each military district one or more Directors of National Service (hereinafter called Directors) who, under the Director General shall be charged with the duties hereinafter mentioned.

3. The powers and duties of a director shall be as follows:—

(a) To make himself acquainted with the nature and importance of the various industries (agriculture, manufacturing, mining, lumbering, fishing, and others) which are being carried on in any locality within his district.

(b) For the purpose of obtaining necessary information respecting conditions of industry and of employment from time to time, the Directors or the Board as the case may be, shall confer with and receive communications from

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persons engaged in the industries hereinbefore mentioned and from any organization especially interested, such as agricultural societies, labour organizations, and manufacturers' associations.

(c) For the purpose of maintaining and carrying on all important industries and of affording to the greatest possible number of men the opportunity of military service, to take such measures as may be expedient to have all available labour in the Dominion utilized to the greatest advantage and with that view to make an estimate of such available labour.

(d) For the like purpose to arrange as far as possible for the employment of women in work within their capacity where additional labour is necessary.

(e) For the purpose of securing the largest available military forces in the present war, to co-operate with and to afford all possible information to the military authorities engaged in recruiting within his district.

(f) To take into consideration the character and importance of the employment in which any persons proposed to be recruited may be engaged; and to notify the Commanding Officer of any unit which is being recruited in any such locality whether the services of such persons would be of more value to the State in the employment in which they are then engaged than if such persons were enlisted for active service in the military forces of Canada.

(g) In case the Director determines that the services of any person are of more value to the State in the employment in which he is then engaged, such person shall not be enlisted in the military forces of Canada without the written authority of the Director General.

(h) The Officer Commanding any unit which is being recruited in any such locality may appeal through the regular channel, from the decision of the Director to the Director General whose decision shall be final.

(i) The Governor in Council may at the instance of the Director General appoint a National Service Board or Boards in any military district. Each Board shall be composed of three persons of whom the Director may be one; and the Director, if a member, shall be chairman, *ex officio*. The Order in Council appointing such Board may invest the Board with all or any of the powers and duties which otherwise would be vested in the Director or with any additional powers.

4. The salaries and allowances of the Director General and the Directors of National Service shall be such as the Governor in Council shall from time to time appoint.

5. Salaries and all other expenses incurred in carrying out the provisions of these regulations shall be paid out of the moneys available for the defence and security of Canada under the War Appropriation Acts.

It is obvious that under the above instructions the duty of the Directors of National Service is to find out the number of men who can be removed from "the various industries (agriculture, manufacturing, mining, lumbering, fishing, and others) which are carried out in any locality within each district," and "to provide that no person be allowed to enlist "whose services would be of more value to the State in the employment in which he is now engaged."

In that view it seemed to me that the first thing to be done would have been at once to enter into communication with employers of labour, agricultural and industrial, in every locality, as the persons best qualified to supply the desired information, and I would have deemed it my duty to communicate at once with Sir Thomas Tait and discuss with him this aspect of the subject, in connection with the resolution of the Directors of National Service for a Parliamentary Committee.

Unfortunately, Sir Thomas Tait has resigned from the position of Director General of National Service, and his resignation, and especially the reasons for his resignation, put a new complexion upon your proposal.

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Sir Thomas Tait resigned not only on account of "what occurred in the case of Mr. G. M. Murray, who had been offered the position of Secretary of National Service," but chiefly, as I understand it, on account of that "incident as indicative of what may be anticipated in connection with the future organization and work of National Service."

I feel that under the circumstances, in acceding to your suggestion, my assistance to the cause, which I have endeavoured to serve from the first day of the war, would not be untrammelled, and consequently as effective as if I continue to serve it according to my own ways as heretofore.

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

WILFRID LAURIER.

Right Honourable

Sir ROBERT L. BORDEN, P.C., G.C.M.G.,
Ottawa.

OTTAWA, Ont., October 20, 1916.

DEAR SIR WILFRID LAURIER,—I beg to acknowledge your letter of yesterday, which has just reached me; and I observe that you decline to co-operate with me in the formation of a committee of members of Parliament for the purpose set forth in the resolution of the Directors of National Service, which is as follows:—

"That a Parliamentary National Service Committee to be composed of representatives of all the political parties in Parliament be formed at the earliest possible date.

"That such committee as soon as possible after its formation issue, by proclamation and through the public press and in any other expedient way,

"(a) A strong and explicit call to the manhood of Canada of military age and fitness to enlist for Overseas Military and Naval Service.

"(b) A similar call to the men and women of Canada individually and through their various organizations to serve the nation in such capacities as their services may be of most value.

"(c) A similar call to all employers to effect such industrial reorganization as is necessary to meet emergencies arising out of the war."

A united appeal for this great national purpose seemed to me especially desirable, and it is with the deepest regret that I learn of your refusal to join in such an appeal.

Without presuming to question a decision which must rest upon your own judgment, you will permit me to confess my inability to realize in what way your future action would be trammelled by naming five members on your side of the House to serve upon such a committee.

The conversation to which I alluded took place when, among other things, I discussed with you the proposals of the Government with regard to railway legislation, and I have a perfect recollection of the answer which you made.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully,

R. L. BORDEN.

The Right Honourable Sir WILFRID LAURIER, P.C., G.C.M.G.,
Ottawa.